

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Current West German Thinking On Foreign Policy

1. Thoughtful West Germans are making a careful assessment of the changing international scene, and are coming up with some new ideas in foreign policy. They are worried that the ground rules under which the Federal Republic has prospered are changing, and they want to be sure that Germany is not left out of the evolving pattern of East-West relations. The thinking process is taking place in public and in private, often producing rather emotional statements. To some extent, these may be motivated by tactical considerations, but there is unquestionably a good deal of sincere feeling behind them too.

2. The Germans see changes occurring in various areas of East-West relations, but not in the (to them) vital questions of Germany and Berlin. To some, this is an indication that Washington is somewhat careless about the interests of its continental ally; to others, it is cause for suspicion that the two superpowers must be deliberately working toward purely bilateral arrangements affecting central Europe.

3. Some overenthusiastic efforts have been made by the press to divide West German politicians into new groupings according to their reaction to recent international developments--thus, the Atlanticists vs. the Gaullists. A trend of this kind may develop, but the outstanding feature of the reactions so far is their individual character, since no two political leaders tend to see a complex situation in precisely the same way.

4. Still, there are roughly differentiated groups. The Social Democrats under Willy Brandt seem to be the most unequivocally behind the US efforts to ease tensions. At the opposite pole are the Christian Democratic "stand-patters" such as Adenauer and Strauss.

5. Somewhere in between, but leaning to the side of change, are Chancellor Erhard and Foreign Minister Schroeder. Acknowledging that the government must have a policy on German unification, the question for the top leaders has been whether to carry over the old Adenauer policy of strength, or find a new policy. They are aware that the argument about negotiating from strength has lost most of its appeal to the West Germans. The public, of course, continues ready to support a strong Western military establishment, but no longer believes that this alone will bring German unification, as Adenauer frequently suggested.

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6. A couple of months ago, Schroeder ruffled the Western diplomatic waters by coming up with a "German Peace Plan," which projected a phased unification. It was not so much a positive stroke in behalf of unification as it was a reminder to the US and UK, who had just signed the test ban treaty, that further negotiations ought to encompass the German problem and that the Germans would like to participate in the preparation of Western positions.

7. Tactical considerations were probably present also in Erhard's mind when he recently unfolded to Ambassador McGhee the concept of a new approach to Moscow. He suggested in effect that Germany might buy its unification through a program of large-scale, long-range economic aid to the USSR. Although it may seem a far-fetched scheme, there is just the possibility that Economist Erhard believes it could work, or, at least, that it could strengthen the German base in international public opinion or otherwise result in some progress. Certainly, he does not expect everything to be accomplished at once; he said that the German people would be willing to make an aid effort commensurate with what Moscow would offer in return, and that he envisaged unification only through stages.

8. But even if Erhard does not really believe that unification can be bought, the putting forth of such a plan would have the advantage of suggesting to the Western Allies that economic assistance to the Soviets should be made contingent on political concessions in return. He might also calculate that such a display of flexibility would please the Americans, Soviets, and West Germans in varying degrees. Its promise of great German goods exports would be sure to appeal to the Ruhr.

9. Moscow would be likely to greet Erhard's reunification-through-aid proposal with a considerable show of disdain, if not ridicule. On a practical basis, it is highly doubtful that the Soviet leadership would consider major concessions on the German question in return for economic assistance. Moscow might, however, see in the proposition an opportunity to break through current West German strictures on bloc trade by making certain promises to improve the situation in East Germany.

10. Erhard has evidently thought enough of his new approach to discuss it with some other prominent West Germans, including his new State Secretary in the Chancellery, Ludger Westrick, and the important newspaper publisher, Axel Springer. According to Westrick, Germany might extend \$2.5 billion of aid a year for ten years.

11. The head of the Planning Staff in the Foreign Ministry, Mueller-Roschach, in talking recently with Mr. Walt Rostow, foresaw not only the possibility of economic aid to the USSR in order to promote German unification, but also the possibility of a denuclearization of central Europe. Moreover, Westrick told McThee that a massive program of German economic aid would also afford the Soviets greater security because it would hold German defense efforts static.

12. Whether Mueller-Roschach had given much thought to the implications of his denuclearization comment is not clear. It is just possible that he had in mind only the denuclearization of the Bundeswehr. Anything broader than that, i.e., involving US forces, has generally been regarded by the West Germans as leading inevitably to a US withdrawal from Europe. Those Germans willing to consider such a development have usually been advocates of an alliance-free status for Germany.

13. On the basis of his remarks so far, it would be inaccurate to impute neutralism to Mueller-Roschach, and certainly there is no reason to connect Erhard with such ideas. Erhard, in fact, was opposed to denuclearization as represented in the Rapacki Plan.

14. Interestingly enough, Adenauer does not appear too far divorced from Erhard's recent line of thought. He does not reject out of hand economic assistance to Moscow in exchange for political concessions. Rather, he says that the present time is not quite ripe for such a course. According to the ex-chancellor, the Soviet position, particularly under the Chinese lash, will become increasingly desperate, and then Moscow will be forced to look to the West for a deal. To strengthen the USSR now, Adenauer argues, would simply postpone that crucial moment.

15. So far Erhard's thinking does not add up to any slackening of interest in close ties with the US or the West generally, or to any downgrading of NATO. The Bonn leadership well recognizes that the Washington alliance is indispensable for Germany's future security. But the leadership is worried that the US will be disposed to play some of the major Western cards without obtaining any improvement in Germany's political condition. It is a matter of survival for the Bonn government, which will face the voters in two years, to make the strongest effort to see that the West does not, as Mueller-Roschach says, "use up its bargaining advantage with the Soviet Union without applying any of it to issues which would improve the situation of those living in Eastern Germany or to movement toward German unification."

18. If Erhard's recent remarks to McGhee were given publicity, there would probably be general approval of them by German public opinion, although the "stand-patters" would, of course, be highly critical. The West Germans would not regard the chancellor's approach as offering a complete solution for Germany's problems, but they would feel that it was an approach which should be cautiously tried. The CDU would by and large go along with Erhard, and the Socialists and Free Democrats would probably be more enthusiastic than their public utterances would suggest. The Socialists, at least, have to maintain a certain reserve as the opposition.